

HAITI AT A GLANCE

POPULATION: 10,646,714 (July 2017 est.)

LANGUAGES: French, Creole

PREDOMINANT RELIGIONS: Christian (Roman Catholic, Protestant), Voodoo

TIME ZONE: One hour behind Eastern Daylight Time (New York City)

TELEPHONE CODE: 509, country code

Anyone visiting Haiti should understand it's a land where wounds from civil strife remain fresh, with the economy in shambles, poverty and crime on the rise, and its democratic traditions weakened. Residents in the capital city of Port-au-Prince and surrounding area are still struggling to recover from a devastating 7.0-magnitude earthquake that hit in January 2010. More than 220,000 people were killed, more than 300,000 were injured, and more than a million people were left without homes after the quake leveled most of the city. This natural disaster as well as recent hurricanes have left many parts of Haiti in ruins.

Yet Haitians demonstrate a resilience and charm that defy their circumstances. Music, art and the poetic Creole language enrich this island nation. Add to that the inscrutability of Voodoo — an undefined belief system that merges traditional African religion and Catholicism in magic, ceremony and performance art — and you have a rich culture beneath the grime and poverty of daily life. Visitors encounter a tropical atmosphere, open-air markets, some nice beaches and coral reefs, and a beautifully rugged landscape. It's a place of frequent delays, poor roads, beggars and power outages even at luxury hotels. If you move around, you will encounter evidence of the destitution that afflicts most Haitians.



COMPASSION IN HAITI

Compassion's ministry in Haiti began in 1968. Today, more than 79,940 children are served by more than 270 Compassion-assisted child development centers throughout the country. Compassion's church-based child development centers are places of hope for impoverished children in Haiti. Under the guidance of caring Christian adults, children's pressing needs for nutrition and medical attention are met. Children also receive tutoring to help with their academics. Health and hygiene lessons teach them to care for their own physical well-being, and positive social skills are modeled and encouraged.

WEATHER

From November to March, day temperatures are in the 70s-80s F /23-32 C and nights are in the 60s-70s F /15-27 C. The rainy season is May through July, but even when it rains, it usually lasts for only an hour or two in the evening. Hurricane season is July through October. The hill country is always about 10 degrees F / 5 degrees C cooler. Always bring a sweater; evenings can be cool.

CURRENCY

The *gourde* (French) or *goud* (Creole) is the currency of Haiti (HTG). Five *gourde* are commonly referred to as a Haitian dollar. In some regions of Haiti, prices are denoted in Haitian dollars, and customers must multiply the number of dollars by five to derive the number of *gourde* required. U.S. dollars are widely accepted in tourist areas, as are credit cards.

FOOD

Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, choose meat that is cooked thoroughly, avoid local dairy products, and assume the water is unsafe (stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks).

SHOPPING

Look for Haitian oil paintings and handicrafts, particularly wrought-iron sculptures and mahogany carvings. You will see high-quality cotton or hand-embroidered clothing and Voodoo-inspired copper jewelry. Be aware that goat-skin products may be confiscated by customs agents — goat skin can harbor disease.

The colorful folk art produced in Haiti is highly prized by serious collectors but is still affordable in rural areas. The Haitian style, often called naive or “primitive,” was developed by untrained artists largely isolated from the rest of the art world. It is truly unique.



ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

The voltage used in Haiti is 110V, and electrical outlets accommodate plug types A or B. (For up-to-date plug and outlet information, check whatplug.info and click on your destination country.) You may also wish to take a universal plug adaptor, available in the luggage/travel sections of most big-box stores.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do** expect traditional and conservative values. Manners are important in Haitian society and Haitians take pride in knowing that their nation stands alone in surviving a slave rebellion.
- **Don't** expect world-class snorkeling and scuba diving in Haiti. The country's reefs have been devastated by overfishing.
- **Do** watch, as you walk down the street, for various Voodoo rites being performed on the sidewalks.
- **Don't** forget that gas stations close at dusk.
- **Don't** be shocked if you see huge rats scurrying along the sidewalks at night. The capital is infested.

DRESS

The weather in Haiti is hot and humid year-round. Bring breathable, light clothing to stay cool throughout the day. Consider a hat or long sleeves to limit sun exposure and quick-dry clothing that is comfortable to wear in high temperatures. Culturally, business casual is expected in most student center and church service visits. For beachside locations, more casual attire is acceptable and it's common to wear T-shirts and shorts.

Women: Modest, loose-fitting tops (nothing form-fitting) are recommended; sleeveless tops are acceptable, but please cover your shoulders in places of worship; pants, capris, longer skirts and loose-fitting, casual dresses are recommended for women.

Men: Button shirts and polo shirts are recommended. T-shirts are allowed in casual settings. Long, non-denim pants are recommended for center visits and church services.

Both: Shorts are highly discouraged outside of beachside locations. A light jacket is recommended for cool evenings or rainy days.

Shoes: Closed-toe shoes are recommended during the day due to potential unsanitary or uneven terrain.

GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

Leave at home all unnecessary credit cards, Social Security card, library cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet. Carry items in front pockets, not back pockets. Do not display large sums of money in public; make visible only the amount of money that approximates your purchase. Never leave items with cash in them (purse, wallet, backpack, etc.) on a bus, car or any other location. Stay alert and be cautious at all times. Don't take safety and security for granted.

U.S. EMBASSY INFORMATION

Website: ht.usembassy.gov

Phone: 011-509-2229-8000

Address: Tabarre 41, Route de Tabarre (P.O. Box 1634), Port-au-Prince, Haiti

We strongly advise you to contact the CDC (www.cdc.gov) or check with your personal physician for more information about your specific health needs while traveling, including any recommendations for immunizations.

*All information taken from the World Factbook and
Compassion International.*

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

The official language of Haiti is French. The country's secondary language is Creole. Some common Haitian greetings include:

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|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Hello | Bonjour |
| Nice to meet you | Enchanté |
| How are you? | Ça va? |
| What is your name? | Tu t'appelles comment? |
| My name is..... | Je m'appelle (name) |
| How old are you? | Quel âge avez-vous? |
| Yes | Oui |
| No | No |
| Please | S'il vous plaît |
| Thank you | Merci |
| You're welcome | Je vous en prie |
| I do not speak French | Je ne parle pas français |
| Do you speak English? | Parlez-vous anglais? |
| I don't understand | Je ne comprends pas |
| You can do it! | Vous pouvez le faire! |
| I love you | Je t'aime |
| I am praying for you | Je prie pour vous |

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Jesus loves you | Jésus vous aime |
| You are precious to God | Vous êtes précieux pour Dieu |
| God bless you | Que Dieu vous bénisse |
| I believe in you | Je crois en toi |
| Tell me about your family | Parlez-moi de votre famille |
| Good/OK | Bon |
| I need | J'ai besoin d'... |
| How much? | Combien? |
| Too expensive | Trop cher |
| Cheaper | Moins cher |
| Where is the bathroom? | Où sont les toilettes? |
| Where is the church? | Où est l'église? |
| Where is the bank? | Où est la banque? |
| Where is the hotel? | Où se trouve l'hôtel? |